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Book Reviews

The New Greek Comedy. By P. E. LEGRAND, translated by JAMES LOEB. London: William Heinemann, and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917. Pp. xix+547. \$4.50.

Professor Legrand's *Daos, Tableau de la Comédie grecque pendant la Période dite nouvelle* appeared in 1910 and immediately commanded the favorable consideration of classical scholars. Now Mr. James Loeb, who had already translated Decharme's *Euripides and the Spirit of His Dramas* (1905) and Croiset's *Aristophanes and the Political Parties at Athens* (1909), has put us still further in his debt by providing an English version of Legrand as the concluding member of a trilogy of French works dealing with the history of ancient drama. The happy faculty of producing a balanced, perspicuous exposition of a period or field has long been recognized as the peculiar trait of French writers. Yet Legrand's original text contained much of the sheer erudition, technical detail, and striving for *Kombinationen* which are more usually associated with German scholarship. With the idea of securing the attention of a wider public, not a little which would be of interest primarily to specialists has been omitted in the present edition. The Translator's Preface states that the selection of passages for omission was made by the French author and that the bulk has thus been reduced by almost one-third. The cutting is especially severe in the initial chapter of Parts I and III. On p. 374, n. 2, p. 379, n. 1, and p. 385, n. 3, the translator deemed it necessary to indicate that the original account was more detailed. In general, the reduction is brought about by the omission or curtailment of footnotes. One would be greatly mistaken, however, if he concluded that the present version were thus rendered altogether suitable for the general reader, for Greek and Latin words, phrases, and sentences are left standing in the text with such frequency as to present a serious obstacle to all but the classically trained. Mr. Loeb himself seems to have come to a belated consciousness of this situation, for beginning at p. 252 he has introduced over a score of notes, most of which are mere translations of Greek words. As a rule, the terms thus elucidated do not seem to be unusually hard to understand; and other expressions, of equal or even greater difficulty, appear by the hundreds untranslated and unexplained.

Naturally, numerous articles and books dealing with Greek New Comedy have been published during the last seven years, and it would have added considerably to the value of the book if the author or translator could have brought the bibliographical references quite up to date. At the very end this possibility apparently dawned upon the translator, for in his interpolated footnote

on p. 531 he has made a brief start in this direction. But, of course, this is something which we should have appreciated if it had been provided, but which we have no right to demand. Similarly, English readers of the non-technical type might have welcomed the substitution of references to English and American publications, where equivalents exist, for the predominant citations of Gallic writers. But the tendency seems, if anything, to be rather in the opposite direction. At any rate, I notice that in the opening chapter of Part I, to look no farther, references to Professor Capps's article in *Harvard Studies*, XV, and to Dr. Clark's paper in *Classical Philology*, I, which appeared in the French edition on p. 31, n. 12, and p. 38, n. 1, are among those discarded in the present version.

I have tested the translation at numerous points and have found it uniformly accurate. Mr. Loeb treats the original with some freedom, frequently recasting a sentence or even redistributing the sequence of ideas a little, yet the essentials of the thought seldom suffer. One rarely becomes conscious that he is not reading an original work, and Professor John Williams White, who contributed a brief "Introduction to the English Version," was fully justified in referring to the translation as "engaging." Nevertheless, in a volume of such compass some errors are inevitable. Thus on p. 25 a certain personage is represented as being "a great amateur of fish," whereas *grand amateur de poisson* of course means simply that he was fond of them. On p. 132 Chrysis, in the *Andria*, is said to have been "the pretty courtesan with whom Simo's son had had relations" (*chez qui son fils fréquentait*). The English expression does not follow the French closely enough to be true to the facts. Pamphilus resorted to Chrysis' house and was at first thought by his father to be in love with her, but in fact her sister, Glycerium, was the object of his attentions. On p. 254 occurs the following: "Aristotle, whose *Poetics* contains, in its second half, a theory of comedy," which would imply that the second book of the *Poetics* is still extant; the original reads *renfermait*. On p. 299 is an allusion to the "*Heracleides* or the *Theseides* at which Aristotle scoffs." The translator has been misled by the French form of these titles, which would be *Heracleids* and *Theseids* in English. On p. 386 "at the end of their plays" is not adequate for *à la fin des actes de leurs pièces*. Though the list could be extended, these are very slight faults in so large a work.

I have noted several misprints of a minor sort. On p. 368, nine lines from the bottom, "spying" should be read for "springing." On p. 407, n. 6, I was puzzled by a reference to the "*Deutsch. Rhein. Mus.*" until a glance at the French text showed that the first word was a typesetter's emendation for the name of Professor Skutsch!

The original edition had no index, but Professor Capps has supervised the compilation of an extensive index (pp. 533-47) for the translation. Where so much is given, it is perhaps ungracious to ask for more. Yet a complete index of passages would have been desirable. At any rate, as I read I noticed incidental discussions of several passages which I should not have wanted to miss,

but which the present index would not enable anyone to find. On pp. 246 and 315 the translator has followed Legrand in giving cross-references, by page, to previous discussions of the same topic, and in so large a volume this plan might have been extended with profit. Less precise cross-references are occasionally given, but are far less helpful.

It is hard to refrain from discussing the treatment of some of the subjects handled by Legrand, but it is a little late in the day for that now. There is the less need of this for the reason that the French edition was competently reviewed from this standpoint by Professor Prescott in *Classical Philology*, V (1910), 377 ff., which under the happy conditions then prevailing came automatically to every member of our Classical Association. I shall limit myself, therefore, to a bare statement of the distribution of the material. The Introduction sets forth the "Plan and Scope of This Work." Part I deals with the "Subject Matter of New Comedy," and falls into five chapters as follows: "What New Comedy Rejected," "The Sources of Our Knowledge—Examination of the Chief Sources," "The Dramatis Personae," "Adventures," and "Recapitulation—Realism and Imagination in New Comedy—Literary Sources and Repetitions." "The Structure of the Plays of New Comedy" is the topic of Part II, which in four chapters treats the "Extent to Which the Latin Comedies Enlighten Us about the Composition of Their Prototypes," "Internal Structure—the Plot or Action," "External Structure—Stage Conventions," and "External Structure—Peculiarities of Dramatic Technique." Part III, "The Purpose of New Comedy and the Causes of Its Success," contains three chapters, which are devoted to the moral value, comic elements, and pathetic qualities respectively of New Comedy. The contents of the book are far richer than this bald outline would suggest.

In conclusion I wish to express my personal indebtedness to Mr. Loeb for the aid which he is rendering to students of the classics by his translations of standard French works in our field. Few of us feel so much at home with any foreign tongue as not to shrink from reading over a thousand pages of solid text without omissions or evasions; yet that is the amount of the ripest French scholarship which has now been put within easy reach of every English-reading classicist. This means, of course, that, whereas these works have mainly been used only for reference purposes on the part of specialists, they may now be read from cover to cover by everyone. I sincerely hope that Mr. Loeb may find the time to continue his service and that we may not have to wait long for the fourth volume from his pen.

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